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SUSTAINABILITY AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF U.S. INVESTMENTS IN AGRICULTURAL POLICY ANALYSIS IN PAKISTAN

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Sustainability and Institutionalization of U.S. Investments in Agricultural Policy Analysis in Pakistan¹

1.0 Background

In general, the large USAID investment in agricultural policy analysis in developing countries has resulted in very little institutionalization of public analysis units. However, some results have been achieved:

1. Considerable human capital has been developed with degree and non-degree programs.
2. Data bases have been expanded and improved.
3. Many diagnostic or descriptive studies have been completed and some dissemination of results has occurred.
4. Relatively few high quality applied studies have been completed on the consequences of policy options within the sector and a small number of very well-done studies have been completed on inter-sectorial agricultural policy issues. The latter studies have typically focused on the agricultural policy implications of the import substitution (industrialization) growth strategy and its implications to the agricultural sector.
5. There have been some successful policy changes focusing on less governmental intervention in the sector. There is a question as to whether such changes are associated with agricultural policy analysis or overall structural adjustment activities.

Why have there been such low levels of sustainability and institutionalization. Some of the reasons:

1. Too many descriptive studies and too few objective policy focused studies;
2. The impact of severe governmental austerity;
3. A lack of host government commitment, with the U.S. paying local and technical assistance costs;
4. A lack of concentration on priority policy issues; policy change usually requires persistence, multi-disciplinary (technology and policy) research, and effective dissemination processes which gradually result in the necessary accumulation of the knowledge required to change policy;

¹ A. J. Coutu, October, 1990

5. Resentment by many governments of the U.S. structuring of research agendas and policy dialogues;
6. Poor linkages among indigenous institutions with many policy analysis units in the ministries of agriculture not linked with the Central Bank, university professors, university institutes, other governmental policy analysis units and with private policy analysis enterprises;
7. Poor understanding and acceptance of market mechanisms relating to resource allocations, prices and distributional concerns;
8. Poor dissemination components that fail to enhance knowledge on policy issues by public and private decision makers, consumers and the general public -- non-technical reports, seminars, news media, etc. on the consequences of policy options related to over-valued exchange rates, taxes (implicit and explicit), water resource management, subsidies, etc.; and
9. Poor personnel policies that do not reward applied objective/positive research on the consequences of changes in taxes, subsidies, price regulations, public ownership, etc.

In general, most U.S. supported agricultural public policy analysis units have not achieved creditability by public as well as private decision makers.

2.0 Agricultural Policy in Pakistan

On the efforts here in Pakistan, the U.S. has a long history of assistance to Pakistan in planning and policy analysis (perhaps too much emphasis on planning). Clearly, there have been pay-offs in human capital formation, in data bases, in building a cadre of persons concerned with governmental intervention in the Pakistan economy, and with some policy changes.

More specific to the agricultural sector, the Food Security Management project was an effort to revive a focus on agricultural policy. Some observations:

1. A domination of diagnostic and descriptive versus objective policy studies;
2. The policy studies assisted in establishing U.S. policy benchmarks and initiating a few policy changes;
3. The identification of an economic network was the beginning of a reasonably good dissemination component;
4. There were some excellent studies completed by IFPRI on both sectorial (wheat) and inter-sectorial policy issues; and;

5. There were very limited interactions between personnel in the public policy office and the personnel of the economic analysis network. For this and other reasons there was little institutionalization of a public policy analysis unit.

The subsequent project, ASSP, that is continuing to address institutionalization of a public policy analysis unit. This effort may better be characterized as a set of actions designed to have the public policy unit gain creditability. Some observations:

1. The action to replace the planning unit with the Economic Wing and to secure GOP financial support is very positive;
2. The restructuring of the role of the long-term advisors, being within the Wing as researchers and continuous in-service trainees along with efforts to develop workplans, job descriptions, etc. or to change the organizational structure is also positive; and
3. The efforts in process to further train agricultural economists at the provincial university (non-degree), to support degree scholarships and participation in international forums are very positive.

Now as an instant external expert, I would like to comment on some reservations:

1. The procedures designed to develop the policy research agenda for the Economic Wing include a request for policy proposals from an array of national and provincial leaders followed by a review and screening by a small committee. I suspect this will result in a wide spectrum of researchable issues. There is a real need to concentrate on a few high priority research areas. To adequately define these high priorities may require that other priority setting mechanisms be evaluated along with particular attention to the priority concerns of high public officials.
2. I suspect that there is an overemphasis on monitoring or describing the state of the agricultural sector. It appears that many governmental entities participate in this set of activities.
3. I also have a feeling that the directorates of statistics and economic research will dominate the Economic Wing with the output of diagnostic and mostly descriptive reports.
4. The directorate of agricultural policy within the Economic Wing is to focus on policy choices relating to inputs, production and aggregate analyses. I suspect that this directorate is understaffed and that fire-fighting requirements will overtake the research efforts. In my opinion, it is this directorate that will

be most influential in efforts to gain creditability for the Economic Wing; I doubt this can occur in a reasonable time-frame, unless there is greater concentration and a substantially larger allocation of resources for objective policy analysis. Closely related to increasing the demand for positive policy analysis is the issue of concentration on priority issues. When priority issues (water resources, fiscal policies, capital markets, export promotion, etc.) are addressed in a well programmed sustained effort and results widely disseminated, the demand for greater policy knowledge is enhanced and significant policy changes may begin to occur.

5. Presently, in the planning stages, there appears to be inadequate attention (perhaps support) for trade and the many inter-sectorial issues that are related. It may also be the case that this difficult policy research area cannot attract and retain the necessary human research capital. I feel that this policy analysis directorate should prioritize the use of its scarce resources on producing policy knowledge toward the enhancement of the agricultural export potential of Pakistan. It is this type of concentrated agricultural policy analysis that should gain the attention of the major policy making entities in Pakistan (National Economic Council and the Executive Committee of the Cabinet). I want to return to this area of policy research.
6. The ASSP is just now taking form, but I suspect that necessary linkages with other GOP and private institutions on agricultural policy analyses is not high on the organizational agenda. The institutionalization of a public policy unit is greatly dependent on establishing creditability. It is unlikely that the necessary creditability can be established without the assistance of an organized network of public, private and quasi-private or selected university economists and agricultural economists.
7. I would also like to suggest that greater efforts be expended to develop an even stronger dissemination component. A most effective dissemination component in Ecuador included at least four versions of the research: a one page executive summary for non-economists, a three page summary of the consequences of policy changes for non-economists, a short technical paper on the research results and the research report itself. These reports were widely disseminated through workshops, seminars, radio and television. A prime objective was to educate public and private leadership on differences between "good" and "poor" policy.
8. Another suggestion would be to consider two types of policy positions within the Economic Wing or under a joint team approach. There could be professionals designated as policy analysts to focus on immediate responses on policy issues originating from the requests of public decision makers and a group of policy researchers focused on the research agenda.

2.1 Recommendations

Let me now shift to some recommendations on agricultural policy. Towards the goal of quality agricultural policy analysis, sustainability and institutionalization, there are some additional options the mission should consider that focus on concentration and assembling the necessary human talent.

I want to reference three areas: concentration on applied sectorial policy research, the same for an inter-sectorial policy focus and sustainability mechanisms. The key elements are concentration, applied research that is objectively done and a critical mass of talent along with the application of alternative organizational and financial mechanisms. The first area refers to a concentration on a limited number of priority sectorial issues done in a multiple disciplinary and joint private and quasi-private network in cooperation with the public staff of the Economic Wing. A second area refers to a similar concentration, private and quasi/private in cooperation with the Economic Wing on a long-term knowledge thrust towards developing an agricultural export promotion strategy -- an inter-sectorial thrust. The third area relates to forming the necessary human capital team and that consideration be given to alternate governance and financial mechanisms -- foundations involving trusts or endowment accounts in support of agricultural policy analysis.

2.2 Sector Policy Initiatives

Real institutionalization in the Economic Wing of the Ministry of Food Agriculture and Cooperatives (MINFA) requires that the unit gain creditability through its efforts in policy analysis rather than its efforts in publishing monitoring, diagnostic and descriptive reports. A prescription for gaining creditability on agricultural sector policies would include high quality analysis at the right time and at the request of the GOP. To meet these three conditions is almost impossible without a carefully constructed research agenda and a concentrated effort. The production of quality knowledge in a timely manner on priority sectorial issues requires a concentration (preferably in a multiple disciplinary mode) on a few priority policy areas and the development of a team of well qualified researchers.

It is difficult to prioritize the area of concentration. There are a number of approaches on prioritization; perhaps the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council has used various mechanisms, such as:

- Seminar with a group of wise men
- Opinion surveys of public leaders, agri-business leadership, producers and producer associations, etc.
- Applying quantitative approaches ranging from a weighting of specific selection criteria, to cost/benefit analysis, to a systems approach to resource allocation (see attached references).

In my short visit, I talked with many Pakistani colleagues that expressed strong preferences for areas of sectorial concentration. The most frequent comments on sectorial concentration focused on irrigation, capital markets and livestock.

On the other issue of assembling a team of qualified policy researchers, I suspect the Economic Wing must seek to involve stronger linkages with private and quasi-private (university) policy researchers. You need more than contractual studies with modest linkages to the Economic Wing. There are a number of networking mechanisms such as adjunct staff, joint appointment of university personnel, co-principle investigator relationships involving public and private professionals, as well as private sector professionals serving as co-directors of selected policy analysis thrusts. Furthermore, the collaboration of other technically related programs and disciplines (in many cases AID will be supporting many such non-economic efforts) is also required for effective concentration.

2.3 Inter-sectorial Policy Initiatives

In my short stay in Islamabad, many Pakistani colleagues voiced their priority for a substantial thrust on inter-sectorial policy (promoting agricultural exports) issues and a feeling that this is an area of real opportunity. A major concern focused on the inability of the MINFA or other public entities without private sector assistance to mount an adequate knowledge thrust that would have an impact on Pakistan's long held strategy of import/substitution -- industrialization strategy. An understanding of the critical policy issues associated with this strategy on production, productivity, the agricultural/agri-business sub-sector and privatizing of the agricultural sector are not well known by Pakistani decision makers. This lack of knowledge is compounded by vested interests that fear the exposure of such knowledge and the loss of associated gains resulting from continued governmental intervention in the agricultural sector.

Another concern is that a substantive thrust on the consequences of a more neutral set of macro-economic policies must be a Pakistani initiative. The possibility of the profound consequences of such a knowledge thrust cannot be perceived as a U.S. dominated effort. The requirement is that such a knowledge thrust must be from Pakistani technocrats. An additional part of this concern is that an independent effort by the Economic Wing in the Ministry of Agriculture is unlikely to result in an adequate thrust on inter-sectorial issues.

On the side of opportunity, I suspect two things. One is that there is a growing group of intellectuals that believe the export development issues should be more intensively studied and that the results of such research should be widely disseminated. The other opportunity is that there is a rather large body of human capital (economists, biological scientists, others) quite capable, if supported, to adequately address these difficult and important issues. The thrust must be Pakistani not by expatriates.

Among the economic institutions that might mount a cooperative and concentrated inter-sectorial program with the Economic Wing of FINFA include the:

1. Pakistan Institute of Development Economics, Islamabad,
2. International Institute of Islamic Economics, Islamabad,
3. Punjab Economic Research Institute, Planning and Development Department of Punjab,

4. Research Department of the Central Bank, Islamabad,
5. Development Research and Management Services, Inc., Islamabad,
6. M-Technical Cooperation, Inc., Islamabad,
7. Applied Economic Research Center, University of Karachi,
8. Agri-Bi-Con International (PVT) Ltd., Islamabad,
9. Lahore University of Management Science,
10. Economic Advisory Services, Karachi, and
11. Selected economists and agricultural economists at various Pakistan universities that have demonstrated a serious commitment to trade related agricultural policy research.

Any serious commitment by the GOP, USAID and other donors should recognize the scope and time frame required. Such a program designed to encourage an export promotion development strategy would require a multiple disciplinary conceptualization. Clearly the economic policy focus would require components on:

- Fiscal issues such as tariffs, taxes, subsidies, alternative revenue sources, etc.
- Monetary issues such as exchange rates, interest rates, balance of payment considerations, etc.
- Regulatory issues such as governmental sanctioning, deregulation, excessive monitoring, etc.
- Agricultural industrial policy issues relating to capital and investment markets, dis-investment of public enterprises, etc.
- Interaction issues of the relationship of policy changes on agricultural production, productivity, rural income, rural employment, etc.

Further, there would be a need to phase such a long-term concentrated multiple disciplinary research effort.

2.4 Organizational and Financial Mechanisms

Organizational efforts for a substantive thrust on either selected sector or inter-sectorial issues must include a mechanism to develop a policy analysis team to include public, private and quasi-private (university) policy researchers. One mechanism is to consider the establishment of an agricultural policy analysis foundation. This mechanism would provide for a governance system that would have a number of advantages. The foundation would have complete autonomy and independence; could take the leadership in programming a joint effort; would provide for the integration of public, private and quasi-private institutions and researchers; could serve a catalytic role in research program development (seizing policy research opportunities and by helping to resolve pressing policy issues), and could serve to strengthen the role of the private sector as a spokesperson for sustained support to public sector research in policy analysis and technology generation.

Consideration should be given to the study of trust or endowment mechanisms in support of the policy foundation. Such instruments could be used to assure the attraction and retention of necessary human capital, continuing enhancement

with scientific colleagues, for operational support and for a well thought out dissemination component.

Agricultural science and agricultural policy foundations have been started, with USAID assistance, in a number of countries. The locations include Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Peru, Philippines, Jamaica and the Dominican Republic. In countries such as the Argentine, Brazil and Chile, policy focused research foundations have existed for many years with endowment support from individuals and large U.S. foundations.

The majority of the USAID supported foundations have some common characteristics. The governance structure includes a board of directors (private sector domination but with some public sector representation), an executive director selected by the board, and a committee structure including those for program, nomination, finance and development. Further, the financial mechanisms have included operation support grants for a fixed time period; endowment support both unrestricted and restricted; development programs designed to build endowments that include efforts to build associate membership programs, solicitation programs to reach other donors both public and private, as well as programs to capitalize on research products of the foundation.

A commonly misunderstood aspect of such foundations concerns whether such enterprises are substitutes for public institutions. In almost all cases these foundations focus on integrating public and private institutions, in being a catalytic agent to develop programs involving public and private professionals, and in being a complementary investor in programs that link public and private activities around high priority issues.

Another important characteristic is that indigenous leadership must take the initiative in developing either agricultural science or agricultural policy foundations.

3.0 Conclusions

Even though the present efforts at developing the Economic Wing in FINFA demonstrate substantial improvements over previous efforts, I doubt that the Economic Wing, without private and quasi-private support, can gain the necessary creditability that is required for sustainability and institutionalization. The two key issues are to demonstrate a concentrated policy analysis effort on priority sectorial and inter-sectorial issues along with the development of an organizational mechanism that serves to build and maintain a team of well qualified policy analysts and researchers.

The suggested organizational mechanism is the development of an agricultural policy foundation. Further, it is suggested that various financial mechanisms be evaluated in support of the foundation.

Finally, I suggest that USAID/Pakistan establish a study team to further conceptualize and evaluate the feasibility of the foundation model. The critical issue for achieving sustainability and institutionalization is creditability. To achieve creditability, a joint coordinated agricultural policy effort by public, private and quasi-public institutions is a requirement.

Appendix 1

Plan of Work

1.0 Background and Purpose

Pakistan, like many other LDCs, is attempting to replace interventionist policies with market-oriented policy action. As this movement to market policies grows, there will be an increasing demand for objective, non-advocacy assessments of the consequences of various policy options. A real need exists to enhance the capacity of analysts in Pakistan to conduct objective agricultural policy analysis, partly as a substitute for the conventional, self-serving lobbying efforts of political and advocacy groups.

The need for this strengthening is clear in agriculture as in other sectors. For the agricultural sector, the policy focus must be both sectoral and intersectoral, and involve both public and private actions.

There are four major areas which should be considered in any effort to improve agricultural policy analysis. These are: 1) knowledge of intersectoral policies affecting agriculture, 2) knowledge of sectoral policies, 3) knowledge to service short- and medium-term needs, and 4) the capability to conduct agricultural policy analysis.

The purpose of this activity is to investigate these areas and suggest means of improving the sustainability of policy analysis capability in both public and private institutions.

2.0 Objectives

The specific objectives of this feasibility study are to:

- Describe the historical and present activities in agricultural policy analysis (policy analysts and policy researchers in both the public and private sectors).
- Assess the demand for policy analyses for both advocacy and non-advocacy type studies.
- Assess the sources of financial support for policy analysis units or institutions.
- Assess the options for sustaining agricultural policy analysis units or institutions.
- Suggest options for improved sustainability in both the public and private institutions.

The general objective of the study is to indicate the feasibility of pursuing a larger, in-depth study of capacity building.

Appendix 2

Persons Contacted

Dr. Muhammad Afzal, Chairman, Agricultural Prices Commission

Ms. Sadia Bashiruddin Ahmed, Research Economist, Development Research and Management Services (Pvt) Limited

Dr. Mubarik Ali, Consultant to RONCO

Dr. M. Ghaffar Chaudhry, Agricultural Economist, Joint Director,
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Dr. G. Ender, USAID Mission, Abt Associates Inc.

Mr. R. H. Goodman, USAID, Private Sector Development

Dr. Zakir Haussan, USAID, Project Manager for FSM and IFPRI

Dr. L. Hesser, RONCO, Corporate Sector Constraints Project

Dr. Tariq Husain, Managing Director, Development Research and Management Services (Pvt) Limited

Dr. M. Fazil Janjua, President, Agri-Bi-Con Int., Ltd.

Dr. Abdul Qayyum Khan, USAID, TIPAN Project Officer

Dr. Ashfaq H. Khan, Chief of Research, PIDE

Dr. Abdul H. Maan, Director General, Economic Wing

Mr. Bashir Ahmad Malik, Deputy Director (AE&S)

Dr. R. J. McConnen, Chemonics, Chief-of-Party

Dr. George McCormick, University Excellence Program, University Grants Commission

Dr. George L. Metcalfe, RONCO, Corporate Sector Constraints Project

Dr. Faiz Mohammad, Consultant to RONCO

Dr. Shahid Najam, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture (International Cooperation)

Dr. Thomas M. Olson, USAID, Chief, Economic Policy Analysis Division, Office of Agriculture and Rural Development

Dr. Shahid Perwaiz, M-Tech Corp., Inc.

Dr. H. P. Peterson, USAID, Chief, Office of Agriculture and Rural Development

Dr. Ghulan Qadir, World Bank Economist

Dr. L. Quance, Chemonics, Statistical Advisor

Mr. Arnold J. Radi, USAID, Deputy Chief, Office of Agriculture and Rural Development

Mr. Ghulam Rasul, Assistant to Deputy Secretary of Agriculture

Mr. Amir Raza, Assistant to Deputy Secretary of Agriculture

Dr. Joseph L. Ryan, Jr., USAID, Chief Economist

Dr. Salahuddin Suleiman Shah, Chief, Agricultural Section of Planning Division

Mr. John B. Swanson, USAID, TIPAN Project Manager

Appendix 3

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